

Dissenting Views to H.R. 970

The need for a long term Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization act is clear. The lack of one makes long term planning at the agency difficult at a time when the agency is working to implement substantial changes to the nation's air traffic control system. While H.R. 970 reauthorizes the FAA's research and development programs for four years, the arbitrary spending cuts that our Republican colleagues have imposed on the agency in H.R. 970 will devastate FAA's ability to improve flying safety and modernize the air traffic control system. For this reason we cannot support the bill.

H.R. 970 makes a 23% cut to FAA's research, engineering, and development accounts from the funding levels enacted by Congress for fiscal year 2010. These cuts are made simply to conform to an arbitrary and poorly considered level of spending reductions, and are not related in any way to a lack of need for the research. The reality is that in multiple hearings before this Congress in both the Science, Space, and Technology Committee and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, expert witnesses have stressed the importance of investing in both R&D and in the NextGen modernization initiative and have warned of the negative impact that cuts will have on the nation's air traffic control system and the flying public.

Former Bush Administration FAA Administrator Marion Blakey noted that:

"The civil aviation industry is an economic engine directly and indirectly contributing more than 1.3 trillion dollars- or 5.6 percent of gross domestic product- to the U.S. economy. It supports nearly 11 million jobs with a payroll of 369 billion dollars."

However she also cautioned that:

"Safely expanding the capacity of our national airspace system and addressing growing environmental and energy concerns are two of the most significant challenges facing the U.S. civil aviation industry."

In short, it is an industry that faces serious challenges to continued growth that must be addressed through research and development. To cut these R&D efforts so drastically while we are trying to recover from a recession, and while oil prices climb ever higher, risks stifling the aviation industry and the millions of jobs it supports.

Equally importantly, the research and development work that is done at FAA also helps to protect everyone who flies. The cuts to aviation safety-related research made in H.R. 970 will undoubtedly reduce the safety of our air transportation system if enacted into law. These effects may not be felt today or tomorrow, but they will be felt and will have serious consequences for the safety of the flying public. Democratic Members of the Committee attempted to prevent cuts to three key safety research initiatives at the Committee's markup of H.R. 970. These

amendments, if adopted, would have increased the four year authorization amount by a total of \$16 million, or a less than 3% of the \$600 million authorized in the bill. As noted in the Committee markup, these costs pale in comparison to the costs of even a single major aircraft accident, both in terms of money and in the loss of life. The amendments would have:

Prevented cuts to atmospheric hazards and aircraft icing research in order to provide FAA with the level of resources needed to perform research to reduce the number of accidents or potential accidents associated with aircraft icing. *(Miller amendment failed by a party-line recorded vote, 16-13);*

Prevented cuts to fire research and safety work in order to provide FAA with the funding necessary to perform research to reduce the number of accidents associated with aircraft fires, to mitigate the effects of a post-crash ground fire, and to help people survive an aircraft fire. *(McNerney amendment failed by a party-line recorded vote, 17-11); and,*

Prevented cuts to crew and maintenance human factors research in order to provide FAA with the necessary funds to carry out research to reduce errors by pilots, inspectors, and maintenance technicians. *(Edwards amendment failed by a party-line recorded vote 17-13)*

It is unfortunate that all of our Republican colleagues at the markup voted to reject these amendments. The choice before the Committee could not have been clearer: invest in needed safety R&D or embrace cuts to that research that will wind up making the flying public less safe simply to meet an arbitrary goal for cutting federal spending. The Democratic Members of the Committee share our colleagues' concern about the nation's deficit, but we reject the notion that addressing the nation's deficit requires us to make our nation's transportation system less safe.

As we move forward to negotiations with the Senate over a final FAA reauthorization, we remain committed to ensuring the safety of our nation's air transportation system, and we hope that our Republican colleagues ultimately will join us in that effort.

H.R. 970 Dissenting Views

Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson

Rep. Jerry F. Costello

Rep. Zoe Lofgren

Rep. David Wu

Rep. Brad Miller

Rep. Daniel Lipinski

Rep. Donna F. Edwards

Rep. Marcia Fudge

Rep. Jerry McNerney

Rep. Frederica Wilson